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Miami pawnbroker traded in espionage

He chased Mengele, aided Somoza; daughter's trial may offer details

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When Army bomb experts dug up Carl Stewart's back yard in Miami last week, they uncovered six hand grenades, nine blasting fuses and a weirdo spy story.

The characters are real: the shah of Iran; Josef Mengele, the Nazi; Anastasio Somoza, the Nicaraguan dictator; and a guy named Eric who drove a cinnamon-colored Cadillac and called himself "Sir."

Strange company indeed for Carl Stewart, a Biscayne Boulevard pawnbroker from Budapest, Hungary.

"Carl Stewart was something else. His work was extensive ... in all kinds of intelligence," said Sergio Pinon, a former detective with the Miami Police Department's anti-terrorism squad.

Stewart was a spy — a good one — until his wife shot him dead.

People didn't know much about him when he died two years ago. He was a thin man with short salt-and-pepper hair and a bulging Adam's apple. Friends knew him as a doting father and cautious businessman. He loved the sea and owned a tugboat.

Attorney Milton Ferrell says he was "a first-class spook."

On Friday, Ferrell and attorney Doug Williams asked a magistrate to unseal records of Stewart's work for the CIA. The magistrate, Herbert Shapiro, agreed. Government lawyers are appealing.

Ferrell and Williams are defending Stewart's oldest daughter, Renee, in a federal court case. The charge: possession and transfer of hand grenades, a felony. Renee is 19.

Prosecutors say she is a threat to society because of her weapons dealing. Her lawyers say the case is absurd. "She's just a kid," Williams says, contending that the grenades belonged to her father, the dead spy.

The trial, which begins Monday, may tell a lot about the spy.

Stewart, born in Hungary in 1931, was the youngest of three sons. The family name was Schonberger. During World War II, the Germans killed his parents at Auschwitz. Stewart survived Dachau.

Sometime after the war, he moved to England and changed his name to Stewart. He got it from a movie marquee. James Stewart was the star.

Soon after, he became an agent for MI-6, the famous British intelligence unit, and eventually moved to Canada. He traveled widely.

In December 1959, Stewart turned up in Havana, apparently in the employ of the CIA. Stewart said he was the manager

of something called the Independent Press System. One of his "photographers" had been jailed by the new government of Fidel Castro.

Stewart settled in Miami. But he didn't settle down.

His family papers, intelligence reports from federal and local police agencies and former associates indicate that Stewart made literally hundreds of trips abroad. In Miami, he often dealt with arms dealers, crooks and agents of other governments.

In 1979, he told a strange tale about a man named Eric W. Jackson. Federal agents were intrigued.

Sir Eric Jackson, a British agent, lived in Pompano Beach, toolled around in a cinnamon Sedan DeVille and flashed a strange kind of shopping list.

He told Carl Stewart he needed guns: specifically, a million rounds of ammunition, 13,000 assault rifles and at least a couple of jeep-mounted machine guns — for insurgents trying to topple the government of El Salvador.

The guns were to go via Panama. But the shah of Iran had fled to Panama. The United States didn't want to embarrass the Panamanians and queered the deal.

Stewart turned up in Haiti, later in Israel, then in Colombia, the Cayman Islands and London. Just before the Somoza regime fell in Nicaragua, he smuggled the dictator's family to Miami.

Stewart's lifelong passion was a search for Dr. Josef Mengele, the

"Angel of Death," who performed bizarre medical experiments at Auschwitz. From his contacts, possibly in Israeli intelligence, Stewart got the execution orders for his parents, signed by Mengele. The original orders, not photocopies, were found in Stewart's desk after he died.

His death shocked nearly everyone.

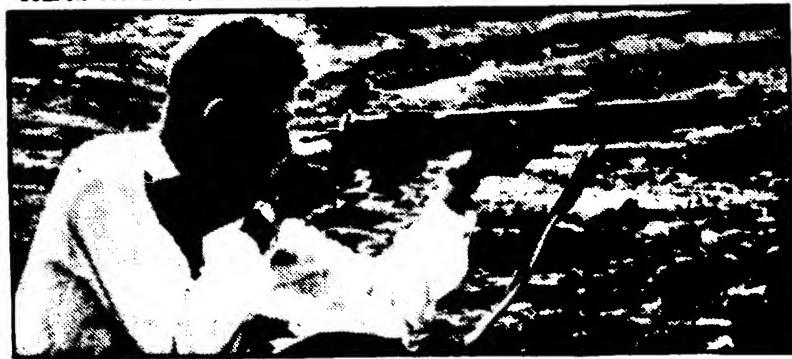
For most of his 52 years, Carl Stewart had taken risks all over the globe. He had been shot at, and he had shot back. There were men in probably half a dozen countries who would have liked to see him dead.

When he died, on Nov. 12, 1983, Carl Stewart was in his bedroom.

He and his wife had argued the night before about a divorce. Joyce Stewart was 48, married to Carl for 19 years and tired of her husband's crazy double life.

The sun was just up, and he was sleeping peacefully in their bay-front home on Northeast 72nd Street. At close range, Joyce Stewart fired seven shots from a .25 caliber automatic pistol. Four shots hit him, in the chin and the chest. She said the shooting was an accident.

Joyce Stewart was judged incompetent and went to the state prison hospital in Chattahoochee. She got well, psychiatrists say, and she is now scheduled for trial Dec. 9 — for the murder of Carl Stewart, the spy who died in his pajamas.



Hungarian-born Carl Stewart spied worldwide for the CIA.

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